



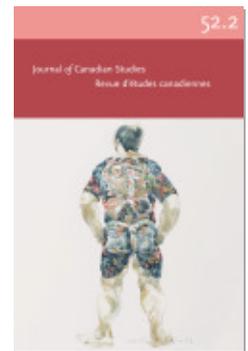
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Jamie Jelinski

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“An Artist’s View of Tattooing”: Aba Bayefsky and the Tattoo Scenes of Toronto and Yokohama, 1978–86

JAMIE JELINSKI

Abstract: This article investigates a series of tattoo-inspired artwork produced by Toronto-based artist Aba Bayefsky during the late 1970s and early 1980s. To do so, I draw heavily from archival documents that belong to the Aba Bayefsky fonds at Library and Archives Canada and newspaper articles published in the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail*. I reconstruct this period in the form of a historical narrative and use what I call a “tattoo scene” as a frame for my analysis. In doing so, I argue that by creating work that depicted members of the tattoo scene, Bayefsky merged disparate social and cultural groups and their respective visual cultures locally in Toronto and later transnationally between Toronto and Japan.

Keywords: tattooing, Toronto, Japan, art history, visual culture, Aba Bayefsky, scene, painting, Canada, Yokohama

Résumé : Cet article explore une série d'œuvres d'art inspirée par des tatous créés par l'artiste torontois Aba Bayefsky à la fin des années 1970 et au début des années 1980. Pour ce faire, j'utilise énormément de documents d'archives qui appartiennent au fonds Aba Bayefsky fonds à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada et d'articles de journal publiés dans le *Toronto Star* et le *Globe and Mail*. Je reconstruis cette période sous forme de narratif historique et j'utilise ce que je nomme le « monde du tatouage » comme cadre pour mon analyse. Ce faisant, je soutiens qu'en créant des œuvres qui dépeignent des membres du monde du tatouage, Bayefsky a fusionné des groupes sociaux et culturels disparates ainsi que leurs cultures visuelles respectives tant du côté local, à Toronto, que transnational, entre Toronto et le Japon.

Mots-clés : tatouage, Toronto, Japon, histoire de l'art, culture visuelle, Aba Bayefsky, monde, peinture, Canada, Yokohama

Introduction

Despite a decades-long local and international artistic output, Torontonians Aba Bayefsky received relatively scant recognition from the fine art establishment during his lifetime. Bayefsky did not follow modern and postmodern artistic trends in painting, including abstract expressionism, minimalism, and pop art, and these movements consequently overshadowed his work and marginalized its impact.¹ Though he is well acknowledged for his work as a Canadian official war artist, scholars, art institutions, and critics have neglected substantial portions of Bayefsky's artistic output.² Arguably the least studied aspect

of his career is the work he created while interested in tattooing throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s. During this period, Bayefsky developed close relationships to a number of tattooists and tattoo aficionados and in the process produced a sizeable series of portraits depicting these individuals. Rather than concerning myself with the visual aspects of this work, here I focus on the connections he formed with those that participated in what I refer to as the “tattoo scene.” Using archival documents from the *Aba Bayefsky fonds* at Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC) and newspaper articles from the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail*, I argue that by creating this work Bayefsky merged disparate social and cultural groups, producers, and visual culture locally in Toronto and transnationally between Toronto and Japan.

In Canadian art history, Bayefsky’s name typically arises within the context of Canadian war art (Celinscak 2015; Niergarth 2013, 170; Paikowsky 2010, 133; Granatstein and Neary 1995, 199; Brandon 1997; 2006, 55–67; 2010, 49; Duval 1972, 80; Hudson 1997, 243, 262). As an official war artist for the Royal Canadian Air Force, he witnessed the inhumanities of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp firsthand and produced a series of macabre depictions of its captives that have become arguably the best-known work of his career.³ Acknowledging the importance of this period, Bayefsky has stated, “My professional work as an artist was permanently shaped by the events during and after the war,” which included visiting displaced persons camps and holding areas for Jewish refugees in France and Italy (Bayefsky 2005, 12). Through his interest in humanity and following his experiences of the war, Bayefsky came to maturity as an artist and solidified his interest in the human body and an empathy toward the personalities that inhabited them, traits that he had begun developing much earlier in his life.

At age 15, Bayefsky’s art career commenced in earnest after he began attending the Children’s Art Centre under the Group of Seven’s Arthur Lismer. That Bayefsky studied under Lismer is noteworthy, given Lismer’s predilection toward landscape painting—a subject Bayefsky eschewed from the beginning in favour of Toronto’s cultural landscape. Through field trips, Bayefsky was introduced to Toronto’s Kensington and St. Lawrence markets (E. Bayefsky 2011, 61), which became reoccurring subjects in his work for a substantial portion of his career (E. Bayefsky 2011, 2014; Lappin 1991) and contributed to his lasting awareness of Toronto and its citizens.⁴ Bayefsky’s talent was further developed at Central Technical School, where he worked under Charles Goldhamer, Peter Haworth, and Carl Schaefer. He was also a founding member of the Hayden Street Group, or Studio Group, started by Barker Fairley in 1938, whose members also comprised John Hall, Warren Lucock, and Isabelle Reid (Reid 2012, 255; Boyanoski 1984, 10).⁵ From the beginning, Bayefsky was mentored by an array of artists that contributed to his artistic growth, and it is therefore unsurprising that he too would later become an educator, beginning with a position as a junior instructor at the Children’s Art Centre in 1941.⁶

Bayefsky's interest in tattooing arose while teaching at the Ontario College of Art (hereafter OCA),⁷ where he began working in 1958. By teaching, Bayefsky was permitted a level of artistic and financial freedom otherwise unavailable to those who worked strictly for the commercial circuit, and he later used this autonomy to explore tattooing as an artistic subject. At OCA, he was also active in the institution's political structure. Alongside faculty members John Alfsen, Alan Collier, and Eric Freifeld, Bayefsky helped create, and ultimately became president of, OCA's faculty association in 1965—much to the chagrin of OCA's principal, Sydney Watson. The group sought to place figurative work at the centre of the institution's curriculum, in light of the domineering impact of abstraction during the period (Wolfe 2001, 9–10). Despite their efforts, Watson reduced mandatory life drawing classes and, following a tumultuous few years, fired Bayefsky and Freifeld in February 1968. After a nine-day student sit-in that protested their dismissal, in which over 700 of the College's 1,030 students took part, Ontario public education minister William Davis reinstated the two and established a committee to examine the circumstances surrounding their dismissal (Lord 1974, 212–13; Wolfe 2001).⁸ Bayefsky's reinstatement was a pivotal occurrence, for it was a decade later through a student at OCA that he developed an attentiveness to tattooing.

In letters from late 1979 Bayefsky noted that “for the past three years” he had been creating work representing tattooed individuals (Bayefsky 1979a, 1979b). Taken together, the breadth of available archival documents, artwork, and newspaper articles instead suggest that this interest actually came to fruition during 1978.⁹ Supporting this, Bayefsky's earliest recorded mention of tattooing that I discovered is found in a notebook in which he recorded the details of a Chicago-based tattoo shop: “Chicago Tattoo Co., 900 W. Belmont Ave., 528-6969, 12:00–9:00” (Bayefsky n.d.[a]).

Familiar with bridging art and diplomacy given a 1971 display of his work at the Canadian embassy in Washington (Kritzviser 1971), Bayefsky travelled to Chicago during fall 1978 for a solo show entitled *Special Exhibition of Drawings and Paintings by Aba Bayefsky* at the Consulate General of Canada.¹⁰ Whether or not Bayefsky visited the Chicago Tattoo Company is unknown, but the above notebook entry is significant for three reasons. First, it delineates the time frame that Bayefsky developed an interest in tattooing: sometime between the start of 1978 and October of that year, prior to visiting Chicago. Second, this entry demonstrates that as he began to cultivate this interest, Bayefsky intentionally sought out reputable tattooists and tattoo shops, as the Chicago Tattoo Company's proprietor, Cliff Raven, was firmly established as a noteworthy tattooist in the United States. Finally, Bayefsky may have intentionally pursued Raven, given that he was also institutionally trained and held a BA in fine arts from Indiana University. Whether or not the two met is unclear, but the pertinent question that has implications beyond Bayefsky's Chicago trip is, how did Bayefsky—without yet being an active participant in and contributor to tattooing's social sphere—know about the Chicago Tattoo Company?

Painting the Toronto Scene

The answer to the above question is likely Paul Arteau, who concurrently worked as a tattooist at Midway Tattoo on Toronto's Queen Street West and studied at OCA, where he introduced Bayefsky to tattooing.¹¹ Before proceeding, it is important to situate Arteau within larger transformations Western professional tattooing experienced during the 1970s and 1980s. Art historian Arnold Rubin (1988c) famously referred to this period as the "tattoo renaissance," characterized by a move from premade tattoo designs, known vernacularly as "flash," toward an emphasis on larger and more complex custom tattoos. Those at the forefront of this shift included Raven and fellow American tattooist Don Ed Hardy, who likewise had formal artistic training prior to learning how to tattoo (Hardy 2013). Through an emphasis on custom tattoos, Arteau represented such changes in Toronto. Stressing his interest in new visual and technical approaches to tattooing, he stated in a May 1979 *Toronto Star* article, "Customers still want hearts with 'Mother' on them. ... We'll do it, but we try to head them toward something a little more contemporary. ... 'Contemporary,' in tattooing, involves more complexity of design—and a greatly increased subtlety in colour and shading and 'tonal values'" (Dault 1979). With an argot characteristic of an institutionally trained fine artist combined with his position as a tattooist working in the developing "tattoo renaissance," Arteau was afforded a unique position to assist in merging tattooing and fine art in Toronto, notably their distinctive social worlds and visual languages.

It is also essential to understand these shifts in tattooing's aesthetic and technical formulae alongside broader cross-pollination between tattooing and fine art around the same time, as evidenced by Marcia Tucker's article "Tattoo: State of the Art" in the May 1981 edition of *Artforum* magazine. That *Artforum*, the leading contemporary art magazine of the period, published an article on the subject testifies to a burgeoning interest in understanding tattooing as fine art. Simultaneously, Tucker's article reveals the extent to which tattooing was intermingling with other types of artistic production during the period Bayefsky began working on his tattoo series, despite its focus on contemporary American practitioners. Although tattooing and fine art did not influence one another in Canada to the same extent as they did in the United States, by the mid-1970s tattooing began to infiltrate Canadian art. For example, Montreal-based artist Sarah Gersovitz (1920–2007) had used tattooing motifs in a number of screen prints by 1974, preceding Bayefsky's work in this area.¹² Understood alongside comparable work from the United States, Gersovitz and Bayefsky's efforts reveal that conversations between tattooing and Canadian artists operating in conventional artistic mediums were being formalized by the mid-1970s. There is no evidence, however, that suggests Gersovitz's tattoo-inspired artwork resulted in or from any interaction with tattooed individuals, and it is in this way that her work differs most significantly from Bayefsky's.

Through Arteau, Bayefsky was able to access the network of Toronto's tattooists and tattoo collectors—an amalgamation of people that Bayefsky would have likely, as a

non-tattooed individual, had trouble penetrating otherwise. Bayefsky even lamented that at first those in this social circle were “deeply suspicious” of his motives (Daller 1982). Such reservations toward outsiders were not limited to Toronto. In the United States, tattooists such as Hardy were actively negotiating how tattooing’s interior knowledge was revealed, including by tattooed physician Dr. Andrew John Lemes³ in a planned, albeit unpublished, book entitled *Encyclopedia of Tattooing*.⁴ Lemes did write a paper on the subject, “Tattoo: Trade Secrets” (1978),⁵ that functioned mainly as a technical guide to tattooing and was intended as the first chapter of his aforementioned book. Though unpublished, the paper credited American tattooists Hardy, Raven, and Robert Benedetti, as well as Japanese tattooist Kazuo Oguri, for having enhanced his “limited acumen of the artform” (1). Lemes also thanked Barbara Rubin—project coordinator for a slated, but never realized, exhibition on tattooing at UCLA’s Frederick Wight Gallery—for assisting in the organization of his manuscript. Included in the paper was a facsimile of promotional material for the exhibition, which was to be curated by Barbara’s husband, the aforementioned Arnold Rubin.⁶ News of Lemes’s paper quickly circulated and caught the attention of the National Tattoo Club of the World (later the National Tattoo Association),⁷ which addressed the matter at its first convention in March 1979. From the Cosmopolitan Hotel in Denver, Colorado, several people denounced Lemes. Tattooist Terry Wrigley from Glasgow, Scotland, bemoaned the “egotists” like Lemes that attempted to make names for themselves by revealing “trade secrets” (National Tattoo Club of the World 1979, 2–3). Hardy likewise distanced himself and claimed that Lemes’s paper contained numerous inaccuracies, lies, and falsehoods, and was therefore a sham.⁸ Arnold Rubin, too, told the crowd that neither he nor his wife Barbara had anything to do with Lemes and his paper (6).⁹

With the tattoo scene’s exclusive nature in mind, Bayefsky’s acceptance among Toronto’s tattooists and tattoo collectors thereby raises the following research questions: What, in Toronto, and later Japan, was tattooing’s social form that Bayefsky would ultimately access? Who was involved in this collective? How did Bayefsky operate in it, and what was his role? Finally, how did he go about producing the works he created, and how were they received?

In April 1979 journalist Sol Littman referred to tattooing’s social form as “a strange sub-culture in Toronto” (1979). Another article two years later by art critic John Bentley Mays referred broadly to the “tattoo subculture” but more intimately to “Toronto’s tattoo cult” (1981). Writing ten years later in a catalogue that coincided with a retrospective of Bayefsky’s work, Christopher Varley similarly referred to Bayefsky’s interest in a tattoo “sub-culture” (1989, 59). On the other hand, in March 1981 journalists Bob Pomerantz and Jane Widerman designated tattooing’s formation, specifically the confluence of tattoo shops on Queen Street West, a “tattoo scene” (1981). Like Pomerantz and Widerman, here I use the term “scene” to describe professional tattooing’s collective form, but do so by drawing from Dick Hebdige’s work on subcultures. Recognizing their visuality, Hebdige

has argued the analysis of a subculture is contingent upon “the process whereby objects are made to mean and mean again” ([1979] 2008, 3). In this sense, I follow Hebdige and suggest that the tattoo scene was constituted by those individuals who produced the scene by way of creating, consuming, or circulating the visual culture that functioned for, within, and alongside the scene. Such a conception can be compared to Toronto’s late 1970s downtown conceptual art scene. As Philip Monk has shown, this art scene was produced by the creation and dissemination of artwork that referenced the scene itself and thereby drew people toward it in the process (2016, 7, 137).

The Toronto tattoo scene began to develop by the early 20th century and was aided by a wide variety of Torontonians, similar to the 1960s Yorkville scene that Stuart Henderson has shown to have included a sundry cast of citizens (2011). As early as 1913, tattooist Charlie White’s “flourishing business” had a diverse customer base that included sailors, lumberjacks, Scottish highlanders, members of Toronto’s Chinese community, and women (*Toronto Star* 1913). In October 1933, tattooist “Professor” Thomas Powell detailed the sailors, soldiers, bricklayers, doctors, lawyers, “plenty” of women, and “all sorts of people and every nationality” that were among his clientele (*Globe* 1933). He reiterated years later that “people from all walks of life” get tattooed (*Toronto Daily Star* 1946). By the late 1960s, “Yukon” Jim Paling also indicated that “lawyers and stockbrokers come in [to get tattooed] as much as ... prostitutes and truckdrivers” (*McRae* 1969). During the early 1970s tattooist Ken Cotterell, who worked under the name “Beachcomber Bill,” began to establish himself as a leading tattooist in Toronto. Cotterell likewise had a customer base of “doctors, lawyers, housewives, firemen, motorcyclists, the good and the not-so-good, most of them 18 to 34 years old” (*Lancashire* 1977; see also *Tattoo Archive* 2014). From its formative period in the early twentieth century onwards, tattooing in Toronto actively intersected with a broad cross-section of the city’s citizens. The issue, as the aforementioned instance with Lemes underscores, is that many tattooists distinguished between clients and those that sought to interact with the scene in an extended manner. Whereas clients were a necessity, those seeking to learn about tattooing represented a potential threat due to the possibility that they may reveal or benefit financially from gaining insider knowledge.

With Arteau’s help, Bayefsky was welcomed within Toronto’s tattoo scene. Despite initial trepidations from those within the scene, by 1982 Bayefsky referred to himself as “an accepted member of Toronto’s tattoo community” (*Bowen* 1982). Bayefsky’s penetration of the tattoo scene can consequently be understood through Will Straw’s description of art scenes, which argues that the relationships and behaviours that are preconditions of acceptance into the scene coincide with a consolidation of professional and social activities (2004, 413). For Straw, artistic scenes alter the conventional “vertical” relationship between teachers and students and create a “horizontal” dynamic that requires one to move from the margin of a scene toward its centre (413). But despite their similarities, tattoo scenes are not wholly the same as art scenes. Bayefsky and Arteau’s student-teacher relationship

best exemplifies this, as it was Arteau that necessarily acted as a teacher in guiding Bayefsky to the scene. Through watching, recording, and interacting with Toronto's—and later Japan's—tattoo scene, Bayefsky operated as an artist-ethnographer (Foster 1995), and by making these works available through gallery shows and print media he merged these scenes with the city's commercial “art world” (Becker 2008).

Available evidence, however, suggests Bayefsky and Arteau's relationship did not continue for the duration of Bayefsky's focus on tattooing. Despite publicly proclaiming to be an artist, Arteau never acknowledged his connection to the established Bayefsky in articles for the *Toronto Star* (Dault 1979; Dunphy 1981) and *Rampike* magazine (Arteau 1979). Bayefsky, likewise, never recognized Arteau by name in the written sources I have located. Newspaper articles and exhibition texts instead referred to Arteau namelessly as a “tattooed art student” (Duval 1981), a “tattooed student at the Ontario College of Art” (Varley 1989, 59), and a “favourite Bayefsky model” (Littman 1979). On the other hand, Bayefsky mentioned Arteau as “one of my students” (Bayefsky 1983a), and, in another instance, “someone who had tattoos” (Bowen 1981). Furthermore, unlike a number of Bayefsky's tattoo works that record the sitter's name, Bayefsky did not write Arteau's name on any of the available works that depict him.

As his teacher's entry point to the tattoo scene, Arteau was likely Bayefsky's first tattooed subject. The 1978 oil portrait of Arteau entitled *Destiny* (see fig. 1), named after a scroll tattooed on his collarbone, best exemplifies the Toronto-based portion of Bayefsky's tattoo series with the city's CN Tower peering in from a nearby window.²⁰ Although the title does not refer to Arteau by name, this portrait is identifiable through comparison to a photograph (fig. 2) by Ron Bull included in a May 1979 *Toronto Star* article that promoted Arteau's exhibition *Arteau: Crime Tattoo* at OCA's Gallery 76. Tattoos that appear in both Bull's photograph and Bayefsky's portrait include a lion, tiger, and dragon on Arteau's chest; tribal-like patterns around his nipples; an eagle on his lower sternum; a First Nations man with feathered headdress on his stomach; and snakes on his upper arms, among numerous others. Bull's photo also reveals that the “Destiny” scroll tattooed on Arteau's throat included a hand of cards that are not visible in Bayefsky's painting.

Considering Bayefsky's work depicting members of Toronto's tattoo scene as a whole, Arteau appears relatively little.²¹ By July 1980, Arteau opened up his own business, Mystique Tattoo, and I have not discovered any Bayefsky work that represents Arteau post-1980. Despite a break in Arteau and Bayefsky's relationship, Arteau's significance to Bayefsky's tattoo paintings cannot be overemphasized. Arteau introduced Bayefsky to members of the scene, including his former boss at Midway Tattoo, William (Bill) Freeman, otherwise known as “Tatu Manotu.” During 1980, Freeman became the subject of a Bayefsky painting entitled *Tattoo Allegory* (see fig. 1).²² In this work, Freeman, a high-school law teacher turned tattoo shop owner (Swainson 1988),²³ is depicted full length in shades of green, red, yellow, and orange with tattoos covering nearly his entire body, the only



Fig. 1. Aba Bayefsky with *Tattoo Allegory*, 1980, and *Destiny*, 1978, as published in Mays (1981). Photograph by Thomas Szlukovenyi of the *Globe and Mail*.

exception being his neck and face.²⁴ By the middle of the decade Freeman eventually had the rest of his body tattooed—a sequential transformation that is visible in a number of Bayefsky’s watercolours from the early 1980s (see Bayefsky 1983, 16, 19, 20).

Given that Bayefsky produced his tattoo paintings over an extended period, it is apparent that Toronto’s tattoo scene embraced him and the work. While this included Arteau and Freeman, others that became subject matter for Bayefsky’s work comprised a tattooed woman named Brenda,²⁵ a tattooist that worked at Midway Tattoo named Bear,²⁶ and others known only by their nicknames, such as “Nell the Nuke” and “Matawa Mike” (Mays 1981). Beachcomber’s Tattoo Studio, operated by Kenneth “Beachcomber Bill” Cotterell, was also one of Bayefsky’s “favourite shops” alongside Freeman’s Midway Tattoo (Daller 1982).²⁷ Despite Bayefsky’s acceptance within Toronto’s tattoo scene, the reception of his paintings by critics, gallerists, and others involved in the dissemination, promotion, and funding of art was markedly more ambivalent.

Bayefsky’s representations of the tattoo scene’s members were exhibited in Toronto’s uptown commercial gallery district, which according to Monk “thought itself the Toronto art scene. Moreover, it thought Toronto the centre of the Canadian art world” (2016, 13).²⁸ The commercial art world’s attitude toward Bayefsky’s tattoo work that characterized the series throughout the following years is exemplified by an April 1979 exhibition at

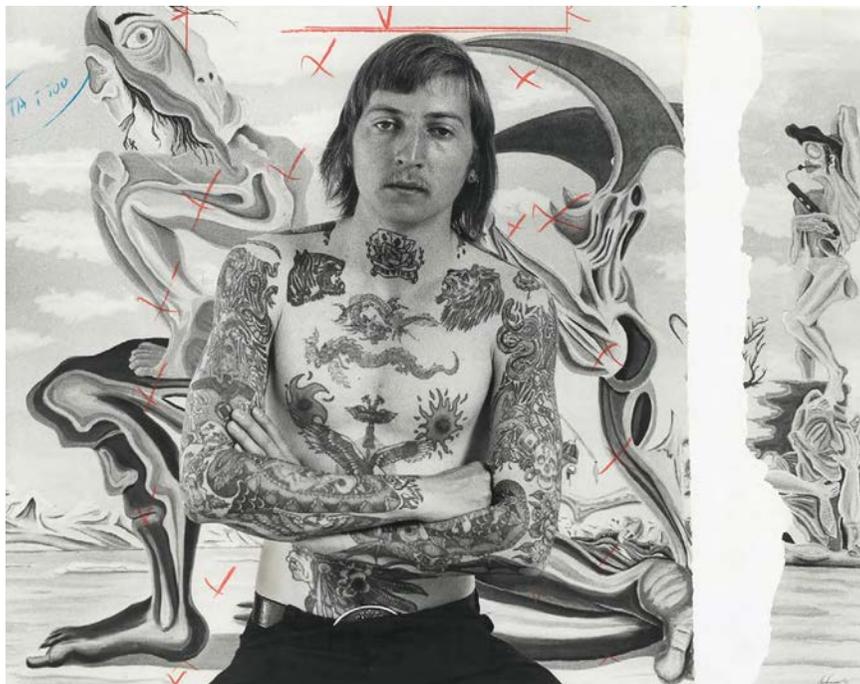


Fig. 2. Paul Arteau, prior to being cropped and published in Dault (1979). Photograph by Ron Bull. Toronto Star Photograph Archive at the Toronto Public Library, "Tattooing" folder, #tspa_0017667f.

Toronto's Prince Arthur Gallery. While not dedicated exclusively to Bayefsky's tattoo work, the show included a number of the paintings as a trial in advance of a planned show of them the following fall. Reviewing the exhibition, Sol Littman mentioned two tattoo works and stated that while "he is not yet ready to exhibit his tattooed people, Bayefsky will include several of them in his current show as a sign of what is to come" (Littman 1979). But the results were unfavourable. In a letter to Bayefsky from Gerald Birnberg, director of the Prince Arthur Gallery, Birnberg reflected both his clients' unwillingness, and thus the gallery's, to invest in the tattoo works:

In analyzing the results of your show, we are terribly concerned regarding a future show of your [tattoo] oils and watercolours ... there was a definite hesitance and reluctance. ... Our clients would not invest the amount of dollars required. By nature of the size and artistic content of the "Tattoo" works, there is no question but that they deserve to be priced accordingly. We ... feel that our clients ... would not purchase from the show to make the venture mutually beneficial to both of us.

What I am saying therefore, is that we must change our plans and not run your show this fall. (Birnberg 1979)

Likely frustrated given his growing enthusiasm for tattooing combined with an inability to exhibit this work, Bayefsky sought another format for dissemination. In December 1979, Bayefsky wrote to Robert Read, vice-president of Canadian publishing house Fitzhenry and Whiteside Limited, in an attempt to measure his interest in a publication of the tattoo work. As a draft of Bayefsky's letter states:

For the past three years I have been working on a series of drawings and paintings of people who are *heavily tattooed*. ...

Tattooing is much more prevalent than is generally realized and the sum total of this large series will, I believe, be a unique statement about the subject.

As of yet nothing has been published of an artist's view of tattooing. (Bayefsky 1979c)

Echoing Birnberg, less than one month later Read responded and stated that "the book sounds strangely fascinating" but declined the proposal and directed Bayefsky's attention to New York where he might find "publishers capable of investing in somewhat esoteric endeavours ..." (Reid 1979). It was not until nearly two years later that Bayefsky's work documenting Toronto's tattoo scene was publicly exhibited.

On 25 October 1981 the Kar Gallery of Fine Art opened *Aba Bayefsky: Recent Drawings and Paintings on a Tattoo Theme*, which ran until 7 November and included drawings, watercolours, and oil paintings ranging in price from \$450 to \$15,000. In the mid-1970s the Kar Gallery was known to show an "eclectic mix" of non-abstract Canadian and European art, and the Canadians on their roster were principally "young artists for whom [Eugene] Karniol will give one show if he likes their work" (Stewart 1976, 46). Bayefsky, though, was not a young artist. Perhaps recognizing his established career and hence a potential market for his work, Bayefsky and the Kar Gallery entered into an agreement that guaranteed Bayefsky \$10,000, either through client sales or the gallery's purchase of work (Kar Gallery 1981).

The exhibition consisted of around forty works,²⁹ and included the previously mentioned *Tattoo Allegory* and *Destiny* paintings. At \$15,000, *Tattoo Allegory* was the highest priced work in the show, followed by *Destiny* at \$8,500. Bayefsky and the Kar Gallery also enlisted the help of critic Paul Duval, who wrote "from this unusual material, Bayefsky has elicited some of the most arresting and impressive creative statements of his career." For Duval, this series was indeed "unusual"—so much so that he used the term three times in his brief statement (Kar Gallery 1981).

Lisa Balfour Bowen (1981) also found the subject matter "unusual" and employed the term to describe a work that depicted a bald, muscular man with a facial tattooing and a large cobra on his chest. Regardless, Balfour Bowen observed that Bayefsky's representation of his sitters exercised "great delicacy" and referred to his watercolours as "particularly subtle and inventive." In comparison, John Bentley Mays (1981) was noticeably indecisive. Mays stated that the watercolours "are beautifully built up from pale washes,"

but suggested that most of the work in the exhibition resembled “art-school exercises were it not for those astonishing designs” the sitters had tattooed on them. Ever the promoter of his own work, Bayefsky sought international exposure and sent information about the show to *ARTnews* magazine in advance of the exhibition. The publication’s managing editor, Amy Newman, indicated that she would forward the exhibition’s details to her Canadian correspondent (Newman 1981). Although inconsequential at this point, this letter set a precedent for a subsequent correspondence with *ARTnews* two years later.³⁰

In being exhibited, Bayefsky’s tattoo work consequently became, in Pierre Bourdieu’s words, “charged with the legitimizing, reinforcing capacity” (1984, 231) of both itself and, due to its “unusual” subject matter, tattooing. But these cultural products required an intermediary to imbue the work with legitimacy or contempt. While critics such as Lisa Balfour Bowen and John Bentley Mays would typically serve the function of elevating or relegating cultural capital, Bayefsky himself most noticeably personified this role. As an individual, Bayefsky acted as a social bridge between the tattoo scene and the fine art world. As an artist, his work connected the aesthetic paradigms of these formations in Toronto, and, later, beyond. But, the mingling of these groups, their visual culture, and, more importantly, their combined product—Bayefsky’s work—was by no means homogenous. Throughout roughly two years of turbulent reactions to this work, the staunchest defender and promoter of Bayefsky’s tattoo series was Bayefsky himself.

During spring 1982, Bayefsky was privy to another solo show, *Bayefsky’s Toronto: A Celebration of the City and Its People*, at Toronto’s civically operated Market Gallery. Although not dedicated to his tattoo work, the exhibition included thirteen pieces depicting tattooing, and according to John Bentley Mays (1982)—who previously chastised work from the series—they were “certainly the most important pictures in this show.”³¹ The inclusion of the tattoo works in this exhibition is critical for two reasons. First, as part of a retrospective exhibition they were situated within a lineage of artistic production from Bayefsky’s long career and thus demonstrated to viewers that the series was a visible continuity and amalgamation of his longstanding focus on the human body and city of Toronto. Second, as an exhibition thematically focused on Toronto and its citizens, the tattoo pieces in the show made a statement regarding the tattoo scene’s position within Toronto’s urban social and cultural fabric. It appears as if the Market Gallery show also cast newfound attention on Bayefsky, as he was featured later that month in a *Toronto Star* article as part of a series on how “interesting Torontonians” experienced the city (Daller 1982). Given his ongoing relationship with Toronto’s tattoo scene, naturally the scene was described as a fundamental part of his involvement with city’s urban milieu. As Bayefsky stated, “I’ve simply come to understand that there are certain people with whom I can feel some empathy in every sense of the word. I’ve painted people all my life, they’re just more people” (Daller 1982).

Japanese Tattooing from a Yokohama Studio to Toronto Gallery

In retrospect, an involvement with the local tattoo scene was not enough to satisfy Bayefsky, who already had his sights set internationally. Bayefsky's navigation in and through Toronto's tattoo scene did not preclude his involvement with tattooing elsewhere, and the Toronto tattoo scene was not isolated from its national and international counterparts. During the period and within the context of what Arjun Appadurai has famously referred to as "global cultural flows" (1990, 6), tattooing—as a social, cultural, and artistic practice—was becoming increasingly globalized via tattoo conventions, magazines, correspondences among practitioners, and the mass media. Though geographically disparate, the participants, knowledge, and visual culture of separate tattoo scenes were progressively intersecting and contributing to a singular, international scene. As he did in Toronto's tattoo scene, Bayefsky predictably became part of this international process.

From 1979 to 1982, Bayefsky actively sought the social and economic capital necessary to secure a trip to Japan to investigate and paint the local tattoo scene. During September 1979, Bayefsky drafted a letter to Japanese tattooist Kazuo "Horihide" Oguri in Gifu prefecture. Bayefsky mentioned his relationship to Arteau (the only instance I have located in which Bayefsky referred to Arteau by name), assumedly to establish his credibility, and expressed interest in visiting Japan to continue his work there. As he stated:

Dear Mr. Oguri,

For the past three years I have been working on a series of drawings and paintings of tattooed men and women in the Toronto Area.

I know many of these people well and my friend and former student Paul Arteau suggested that I write to you about a visit to Japan to continue this series of paintings of tattooed people.

We all know your great reputation as a master tattoo artist and I have admired—through reproduction—the work that I have seen. I am sorry that I was not able to attend the [North American Tattoo Club's] convention in Houston, Tex which would have given me an opportunity to meet you and to discuss my proposal which is—

If I were to visit Japan in the Spring for about one month would you assist me in meeting some of the tattooed people whom you know. ...

I look forward to hearing back from you soon and meeting you in the spring.

Yours sincerely,

Aba Bayefsky (1979b)

Less than one month later Bayefsky received Oguri's response. Oguri noted that he was "very glad" that Bayefsky had contacted him and indicated that he had met Arteau at the

Houston convention (Oguri 1979) in January 1979, where Oguri had won a first-place award in the women's tattoo competition (Gillan 1979). Oguri was enthusiastic about Bayefsky's request and wrote, "I would be more than happy to help you. In addition to my work, I would also like you to see the tattoos of my clients, so I am going to contact many of them to make this happen" (Oguri 1979).³² But Bayefsky was not the first Westerner to communicate with Oguri. To grasp the circumstances surrounding this correspondence, one must be aware of Oguri's previous interactions with North Americans. Since at least the early 1970s, Oguri had been actively exporting his aesthetic and technical knowledge via communication with a number of Westerners, most notably the Honolulu-based tattooist Norman Keith Collins—better known as "Sailor Jerry"—who was eager to learn Japanese tattoo techniques and imagery in order to integrate them into his own work.³³ In 1972, Collins hosted Oguri in Honolulu, where he encountered American tattooists Mike Malone and Don Ed Hardy. The following summer, Oguri returned to America, where he also met medical illustrator Steve Gilbert, who had been corresponding with Oguri independently of the others.³⁴ At the conclusion of the trip, Oguri returned to Japan with Hardy, who worked at Oguri's studio until October 1973 (Hardy 2013, 113–39). With these events in mind, the stage was set for Bayefsky long before his interest in tattooing came to fruition several years later.

Oguri, however, was not the first Japanese tattooist to engage in extended cross-cultural interaction with Westerners. At least a century prior, Japanese tattooists had eagerly tattooed Westerners, aided by newly established trade relationships and opportunities for cultural exchange made possible by American Commodore Matthew Perry's "opening" of Japan in July 1853. Throughout its history, tattooing in Japan went through numerous legislations, but during the Meiji period (1868–1912) tattooing faced several laws that prohibited the practice (van Gulik 1982). Contradictorily, these new laws did not apply to Western visitors, many of whom journeyed to Yokohama to acquire tattoos. Among the best documented cases of Westerners that became what Anna Felicity Friedman has referred to as "tattooed transculturites" in Japan (2012, 391–99), and more particularly, Yokohama, included members of the British Royal Family (Koyama 2007); Charles Longfellow, son of poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (Guth 2004); and preeminent English tattooist George Burchett (Burchett 1960, 38–42).³⁵ More recently, and just a few years prior to Bayefsky's involvement with tattooing, other artists travelled to Japan under similar pretexts. This included Martha Cooper, who visited Tokyo in 1970 to photograph the work habits and lifestyle of tattooist Bunzo "Horibun I" Yamada (Cooper 2011). Sandi Fellman also visited Tokyo, Osaka, and Yokohama in fall 1982 to photograph full-body tattoos that adorned Japanese men and women (Fellman 1986). Bayefsky's eventual presence in Japan therefore places him within a long lineage of Westerners who intersected with tattooing during their time as tourists in Japan, or, like him, visited explicitly to observe and document the practice.

Having secured an invitation from Oguri, Bayefsky began organizing to make his trip, planned for May 1980, a reality. Among those he contacted for funding was Gilles Lefebvre, director general of the Bureau of International Cultural Relations at the Department of External Affairs. Citing an earlier communication with Lefebvre and mentioning being named to the Order of Canada in June 1979 as possible leverage,³⁶ Bayefsky outlined his intention to produce images of “the most interesting” tattooed people in Japan (Bayefsky 1979b). Noting a history of funding rejections from the Canada Council, Bayefsky requested Lefebvre’s assistance with funding this excursion, which had a projected cost of \$5,000 (Bayefsky 1979b). In early January 1980, Lefebvre’s colleague Jacques Montpetit, director of the Cultural Affairs Division at the Department of External Affairs, wrote to Bayefsky and expressed the department’s inability to fund his trip (Montpetit 1980). A month later, another letter followed from Lefebvre, who stated, “The opportunity for you to sit with the most interesting tattooed people in Japan is indeed unique and as an artist, I do wish that you will succeed in your project,” but reiterated Montpetit in lamenting the department’s position (Lefebvre 1980).

Though Bayefsky mentioned to Lefebvre about a lack of previous success with the Canada Council, the council had in fact given the artist funding for at least two international trips. During 1958, a grant from the council enabled him to visit India to study Indian art and culture. Bayefsky documented the India trip with watercolours (McCarthy 1958) and the resulting work was exhibited at Toronto’s Park Gallery during March 1959 (Sabiston 1959).³⁷ Approximately a decade later he visited Japan to act as a jury member for the International Biennial Exhibition of Prints in Tokyo (*Globe and Mail* 1960). A second Japanese trip, this time funded by the council, began in September 1969 while Bayefsky was on sabbatical from OCA.³⁸ Bayefsky’s second trip to Japan also yielded a substantial series of watercolour portraits documenting the Japanese (Kritzwisser 1970). Having visited twice through funded auspices, Bayefsky likely felt a sense of comfort in the possibility of returning to Japan and, more importantly, that his proposed trip would be financially supported as well.

Undeterred by the rejection from the Department of External Affairs, Bayefsky doggedly pursued funding from the Canada Council. In July 1982, Bayefsky received a letter from Fabienne Bilodeau, visual arts officer with the Canada Council, that indicated a grant application he had submitted was denied (Bilodeau 1982). Given the timing, it is likely that this was to supplement his trip to Japan.³⁹ A draft of a letter to the Canada Council that followed communicated Bayefsky’s frustration and detailed that he was “deeply disappointed” with the decision. Despite his earlier trips to India and Japan, Bayefsky went on to indicate that he assumed that he was “personally and permanently excluded from receiving a Canada Council grant” (Bayefsky n.d.[b]).

The council’s 1979–80 annual report addressed frequent questions regarding application evaluation and noted that submissions were reviewed by “hundreds of independent

professionals in the arts ... [who acted] either as individual assessors or as members of juries" (Canada Council 1980, 27).⁴⁰ Resonating with Bayefsky's perception of personal and permanent exclusion, these concerns came to the fore the following year due to a belief that grants were adjudicated by artist "cliques" who "favor[ed] certain styles of art or artists from certain regions of the country" (Canada Council 1981).⁴¹ To counter such claims, the council stressed that roughly 80% of all applications were unsuccessful and that jury members and assessors were selected from a list of approximately 1,700 potential reviewers that included artists, curators, educators, and administrators.

Given his rejection from the Canada Council, it is unclear how Bayefsky funded his eventual trip, though his exhibitions between 1981 and 1982 may have provided the financial assistance and incentive required to set this protracted plan in motion. After his correspondence with Lefebvre, Bayefsky drafted another letter to Oguri to confirm he was in the process of making arrangements for a trip to Japan that May and requested information regarding what cities he would visit (Bayefsky 1980). Oguri suggested that Bayefsky first visit Tokyo, where he would meet local tattooists and take photographs of Oguri's clients before proceeding to Gifu prefecture to meet Oguri (Oguri 1980). Seemingly eager for Bayefsky's impending visit, Oguri declared, "I would appreciate if you provide the content of your interest in detail so that I can make the best preparations for you. I would like to cooperate as much as I can" (Oguri 1980). Despite the preparation, Bayefsky did not make it to Japan in May 1980 as planned.

In a draft letter from Bayefsky to Oguri dated only with the year 1982,⁴² Bayefsky noted that "the past year has been a complicated one" but indicated he was still interested in visiting Japan in September or November 1982 to complete their "long delayed artistic undertaking" (Bayefsky 1982a). An August 1982 letter to Bayefsky from Setsuko Thurlow at the International House of Japan suggests that plans were ongoing but reveals that Bayefsky was having difficulties contacting Oguri:

Soon after my arrival here I attempted to telephone Mr. Oguri in Gifu City. I could not find his telephone number, unfortunately ... I asked the people at the International House to locate the number for the Japan Association for the Tattoo Artists but they did not feel "that such an underground organization would be officially registered in the directory." Such a statement made me feel too uncomfortable for me to make a direct contact with Mr. Oguri so when I had lunch with the Cultural Attache of Canadian Embassy the other day I decided to consult with him re [sic] how to make a contact with Mr. Oguri. I was hoping that he would volunteer to make a contact but I agreed with him that it would be better if I did. So I sent Mr. O a special delivery letter giving my name and address. I'm waiting to hear from him either by phone or mail. (Thurlow 1982)

The same correspondence also made reference to Bayefsky's interest in giving a series of lectures on Canadian art. Among those who entertained this idea included Yorihiro Naito, president of Tama Art University,⁴³ and Louis Hamel, Second Secretary of Cultural Affairs

at the Canadian embassy in Tokyo. But these lectures never came to fruition, and, as Thurlow relayed to Bayefsky after conversations with both Naito and Hamel, this was due to bureaucratic obstacles, facilitating translation, and, above all, timing (Thurlow 1982).

An unrelated letter from Hamel to Bayefsky specified he had arranged an appointment for Bayefsky at the Medical Pathology Museum at Tokyo University (Hamel 1982). Bayefsky likely did not receive this letter, dated 2 December 1982, prior to his subsequent arrival in Japan, and there is no written evidence to prove he attended the scheduled meeting at the museum with Professor Yuzuru Yoshida.⁴⁴ Though I was unable to locate Bayefsky's initial correspondence to confirm the nature of the visit, it is likely that this was intended as an opportunity to view the museum's collection of flayed and preserved tattooed skins. In any case, Bayefsky's probable awareness of the collection points to his depth of knowledge about Japanese tattooing, considering that this collection was not widely known until 1987, when a brief article on the remains was published in *TattooTime* magazine (Hardy 1987, 74–78).

By late 1982, over three years after his initial correspondence with Oguri, Bayefsky finally arrived in Japan.⁴⁵ Oguri, however, had fallen ill sometime in 1982, which is likely the reason Bayefsky and Thurlow had difficulty reaching him. He did not attend a convention in Long Beach that year as planned (Hardy 2013, 93–94), and, despite their extended correspondence, the Japanese tattoo artist did not meet Bayefsky. Characteristically, Bayefsky came into contact with another well-regarded tattooist in the Japanese scene: Mistuaki “Horikin” Ohwada. Located in Yokohama, where many tattoo-tourists visited during the late nineteenth century, Ohwada allowed Bayefsky to watch him work and create a number of portraits of himself and his clients. Reflecting on his time with Ohwada, Bayefsky recollected:

I was able to observe him at work developing designs from the initial black outline to a finished full colour tattoo. ... The masters [*sic*] working habits are disciplined—even Spartan. His daily routine begins at about 5am when he grinds the black, carbon ink-stick (*sumi*) into a smooth liquid pigment for use that day and by 7am he is at work on his first client and continues working on different tattoos throughout the day. (Bayefsky n.d.[c])

While in Yokohama, Bayefsky produced a significant amount of watercolour portraits that represented members of Yokohama's tattoo scene. The work from this series emphasizes the bodies and respective tattoos of Bayefsky's sitters and consequently resembles the tattooed warriors portrayed in Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints beginning in the early nineteenth century (Thompson 2017). Among them is an image (fig. 3) displaying Ohwada's tattooed bodysuit from behind that is now in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada. In the work, Bayefsky captured the Buddhist deity Fudo tattooed on Ohwada's back by tattooist Horiyoshi III, Ohwada's calligraphic scalp tattoo, and motifs characteristic of Japanese tattooing including peonies, windbars, and waves interspersed throughout the



Fig. 3. *Tattooed Figure* (Mitsuaki Ohwada), by Aba Bayefsky, 1983, watercolour over graphite on wove paper, 119.3 x 75.8 cm. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Acc. # 41063.

rest of his body. A second work (fig. 4) shows a man with a full back tattoo depicting two equally tattooed samurai warriors in combat. Now held by the Judith and Norman ALIX Art Gallery, after being purchased in 2002,⁴⁶ this painting represents one of the many Japanese men that posed for Bayefsky in Yokohama.⁴⁷ While his portraits of those in the Toronto tattoo scene consisted of both oil and watercolour paintings, his work from Japan was exclusively painted in watercolour. That Bayefsky worked in watercolour while abroad is unsurprising, as it is more conducive to travelling and painting in close quarters, such as tattoo studios, due to the medium's compactness, comparative lack of odor, and ability to be rendered on paper rather than bulky canvas.



Fig. 4. *Tattooed Figure*, by Aba Bayefsky, 1983, watercolour and graphite on wove paper, 76.2 x 55.9 cm, collection of the Judith and Norman Alix Art Gallery, Acc. # 003.001.001.

Upon Bayefsky's return to Canada, the Japanese tattoo scene came to interact with its counterpart in Toronto via this newly produced work. By early 1983, the artist quickly set about promoting the paintings and contacted *ARTnews* magazine to suggest an article on tattooing. The magazine's editorial assistant, Ellen Elchlepp, responded and declared, "Unfortunately, we do not feel it would be an appropriate subject ..." ([Elchlepp 1983](#)). Ironically, in 2012, the magazine published an article by Margot Mifflin that focused on exactly what Bayefsky had done roughly three decades earlier: the incorporation of tattoo imagery into fine art ([Mifflin 2012](#), 92–97). *ARTnews*'s rejection and later embrace

of tattooing underscores the changes the practice has experienced in relation to fine art over the last three decades while simultaneously demonstrating Bayefsky's pioneering role in merging two largely separate social spheres and visual cultures. After his letter to *ARTnews*, Bayefsky continued his predisposition toward self-promotion and contacted Marcia Tucker, founder and director of the New Museum in New York. Bayefsky indicated that he had read her recent writing on tattooing⁴⁸ and outlined his involvement with it in Toronto and Japan, while asserting that his work from Japan was "of course totally different in concept and is even technically different [from the earlier Toronto work]" (Bayefsky 1983b). Typical of many over the previous years, Tucker thanked Bayefsky for his letter but did not express interest in his work (Tucker 1983).

Undeterred, Bayefsky continued to pursue the dissemination of his efforts, and by 1983 he was finalizing plans with Yaeko Okui in Tokyo for a book of his tattoo work (Bayefsky 1983c). The book, however, was self-published and consequently testifies to his resolve in making the work available, especially to those without the funds or proclivity to purchase an original drawing or painting. Published under the title *TATTOO/83* (Bayefsky 1983d), the book was first available as a \$40 pre-order at a Gustafsson Galleries exhibition entitled *Aba Bayefsky: A Japanese Sketchbook*, which ran for approximately two weeks starting on 15 November 1983.⁴⁹

Although not dedicated to his tattoo works, these paintings became the focus of local critics. Christopher Hume praised and called the paintings "loose but accurate ... [and] done in the spirit of objectivity" (1983). John Bentley Mays, who had previously demonstrated a mercurial perspective toward Bayefsky's Toronto tattoo work, condemned the watercolours as "deft and bland" and "entirely domesticated" (1983). Whether or not the mixed reception played a role is indeterminate, but following the exhibition Bayefsky produced few new tattoo works.⁵⁰

Fall 1983 marked a crucial period in Bayefsky's involvement with tattooing. Having visited Japan, exhibited the work made there, and published a coinciding book, Bayefsky's focus on tattooing began to taper. Archival materials from post-1983 suggest that throughout the following years Bayefsky nevertheless maintained some connection to the Yokohama scene. This included sending copies of *TATTOO/83* (Bayefsky 1983d) to Louis Hamel at the Canadian embassy, including one for Ohwada. Hamel alluded to the possibility of showing the work in Japan. He expressed hope the book would "generate interest in an exhibition" and would therefore would contact Bayefsky once he "receive[d] an interesting proposal" (Hamel 1984). Unfortunately, Bayefsky never had the opportunity to exhibit this work in Japan. Nevertheless, Bayefsky's contributions to the Japanese tattoo scene were officially recognized in May 1986 when the Tattoo Club of Japan's chairman Mitsuaki Ohwada and president Tadasu Izawa initiated him to the club as a "Special Advisor" in the form of a mailed certificate that authenticated his newfound role (Tattoo Club of Japan 1986).⁵¹

Conclusion

Following 1983, Bayefsky continued to participate in the Toronto scene, albeit in a limited capacity. In 1984, tattooist Dwight Walter Bryant, or “Dee,” invited Bayefsky to the Adventure Tattoo Club of Canada’s first annual meeting at the Embassy Club in Barrie, Ontario, on 15 November 1984 ([Adventure Tattoo Club 1984](#)). Whether Bayefsky attended is undetermined, but this event is noteworthy as it was meant to mark the public unveiling of William Freeman’s recently completed bodysuit tattoo, which now included tattoos that covered his entire head. Written in carnivalesque prose alongside a photograph of Freeman’s fully tattooed face, the event’s invitation invited guests to “MAKE AN APPEARANCE TO SEE TATU MANOTU, LIVE IN FULL COLOUR IN ALL THIS WORLD, HE IS UNIQUELY ONE OF A KIND!!! ‘A SINGLE HARMONIOUS WHOLE’” ([Adventure Tattoo Club 1984](#)).

This event is of interest because I have only located one Bayefsky works that depicts tattooing post-1983, an oil painting of Freeman entitled *Tatu Manotu* (1985).⁵² Since Freeman was one of Bayefsky’s earliest tattooed sitters, it is plausible that Bayefsky briefly returned to his series in order to produce an image of Freeman with his face fully tattooed—a capstone for both Freeman’s process of acquiring tattoos and Bayefsky’s tattoo series. In this painting, Freeman’s long, dishevelled hair seen in *Tattoo Allegory* from five years earlier is replaced by greying hair and a receding hairline. Whereas Bayefsky’s earlier depictions of Freeman painstakingly detailed the intricate tattoos that covered nearly his entire body, here they are concealed—except on his hands and face—by a pinstriped suit, white shirt, and tie. The visible tattoos instead appear as a thick, scaled skin and the only discernible designs are a sun on Freeman’s forehead and yin-yang on his chin. Considered alongside the event that celebrated Freeman’s completely tattooed body, this work suggests the end of his transition from William “Tatu Manotu” Freeman to Tatu Manotu.⁵³

Aside from his induction into the Tattoo Club of Japan, 1985 effectively marked the end of Bayefsky’s involvement with tattooing. A dearth of archival records and artwork pertaining to tattooing following this period attest to a waning interest in the practice, or at least in representing and documenting it. Whether or not Bayefsky continued to maintain his relationship to Toronto and Yokohama’s respective tattoo scenes in the following years is unknown, but Bayefsky’s work is a testament to an epoch when professional tattooing underwent immense aesthetic, technical, and collective change and development. In Toronto, Bayefsky’s inroads into the local scene occurred alongside the “tattoo renaissance,” which was paralleled by intersections between tattooing and fine art—processes that concurrently took place on a larger scale in the United States. On the other hand, in Japan, and Yokohama particularly, Bayefsky arrived at a globalizing moment when Japanese tattooists such as Oguri and Ohwada were actively exporting their names, work, and knowledge to the West through people like Bayefsky. Ultimately, through Bayefsky’s work

we are able to better understand these elusive tattoo scenes and situate them alongside related artistic production, social interaction, and cultural exchange.

JAMIE JELINSKI is a doctoral candidate in cultural studies at Queen's University, where his research examines the history of professional tattooing in Canada from the late nineteenth century to the early 1980s. His recent published and forthcoming contributions, respectively, include articles in *Visual Anthropology* and *Études/Inuit/Studies*.

NOTES

Condensed versions of this paper were presented at the Untold Stories of the Past 150 Years conference organized by the Centre for Canadian Studies at University College Dublin, a trip made possible by generous funding from the Canadian Studies Network, and at the 2017 annual meeting of the International Visual Sociology Association. On both occasions, I received constructive feedback from a number of conference attendees. The *Journal of Canadian Studies*'s editorial board provided insightful comments at an early stage in this paper's development. I am indebted to two anonymous reviewers for their engaged criticisms that encouraged me to push this paper to its present state. Carmen Forquer Nyssen graciously offered feedback on this article and gave me number of sources that I would have otherwise been unable to access. Finally, I must acknowledge Bear for his vibrant conversations about the Toronto tattoo scene of the period.

1. I make this statement in opposition to Pamela Wachna, who wrote, "Bayefsky is unaffected by artistic fads" (1982). Others have made similar suggestions, including Humphrey Milnes in a catalogue for Bayefsky's 1967 exhibition at the Albert White Gallery, who stated that "he [Bayefsky] has never accepted the view implicit in the cult of yesterday's pop art or day before yesterday's 'abstract expressionism' and 'action' painting and the like that art is properly an amusement or puzzle for some small in-group" (1967). More recently, Paul Duval has asserted that "Bayefsky never painted to please. He was not a 'popular' artist" (2005, 4).
2. As Bayefsky's daughter Edra has expressed, "The major galleries and critics largely ignored him, and the art marketplace follows their lead today. ... I carry the weight of knowing that what he wanted most never happened—an exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario" (E. Bayefsky 2011).
3. The work Bayefsky produced as an official war artist is now in the collection of the Canadian War Museum.
4. Bayefsky was still using Kensington Market as a subject matter in his work as late as 1976, which was exhibited in lecture room 101 at the Ontario College of Art beginning on 10 December (Purdie 1976).
5. For more on painting in Toronto around the same period, see Hudson (1997).
6. The biographical information in this paragraph is heavily indebted to Varley (1989).
7. The institution was established in 1876 as the Ontario School of Art, which operated under this name until 1886. After this the institution went by the following names: Toronto Art School (1886–90); Central Ontario School of Art and Industrial Design (1890–1912); Ontario College of Art or OCA (1912–96); Ontario College of Art and Design or OCAD (1996–2010); and more recently, OCAD University (2010–present).

8. In an article describing the situation, journalist Ian Porter (1968) noted that the sit-ins lasted from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. with students “waving placards denouncing Principal Sydney H. Watson. They were joined in their protest by almost all the remaining members of the drawing and painting faculty. ... What had been last week a departmental squabble with the college administration became full-scale defiance supported by students in all but one of the eight college departments.” For Bayefsky’s perspective on the events, see Bayefsky (1968).
9. Paul Duval has also indicated that 1978 was the commencement of Bayefsky’s tattoo series (2005, 7).
10. The Chicago show was on display from 2 November to 15 December.
11. According to Tom Smart (2013), who attended OCA and was a student of Bayefsky’s during this period, Arteau—or as Smart refers to him, “the young tattooed man”—also acted as a model in figure drawing and painting classes.
12. A number of Gersovitz’s works depicting tattooing are in the collection of the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, including *Tear along the Dotted Line* (1974); *The Lancaster Tattoo* (1974); *Tattooed Sailor* (1974); *Classical Tattoo: II* (1975); and *Tattooed Lady* (1975). These works can be found under the following accession numbers, respectively: #0000463054; #0000462684; #0000463053; #0000462612; and #0000462768. Library and Archives Canada holds an edition of *The Lancaster Tattoo* under accession number #R8304–369. According to the *Sherbrooke Record*, a number of Gersovitz’s tattoo works were included in an exhibition in the Grand Hall of the Université de Sherbrooke during December and January 1978 (*Sherbrooke Record* 1978).
13. A photograph of Lemes’s large, phallic-like squid tattoo done by Don Ed Hardy can be seen in Morse (1977, cover, 31). As Hardy stated of the work, “The person what’s wearing the squid design happens to be a physician. I think he just wanted something very different done. He said that he always had a dream of having one giant image that would cover him. He had seen a photo of a Japanese guy with a huge snake on him. He felt that it would be incredible to have a big squid on him with tentacles running down his arms and legs. I thought it was a hot idea and agreed to do it. I researched the subject thoroughly as I usually do in large work. I looked at a lot of pictures and read extensively about squids. I learned that squids are very weird creatures and very mysterious. I began by making a rough watercolour picture of the squid. I threw the idea to him of using mostly red pigment to make a statement that was very strong and simple, and he liked the idea so we started the job. I just free-handed it on his back. The whole job took about twenty sittings” (quoted in Morse 1977, 30).
14. An unpublished manuscript with the same title and dated 1973 can be found in the Arnold Rubin Papers at UCLA’s Fowler Museum of Cultural History (Box 40, Folder 1).
15. I have only been able to locate said paper at the Smithsonian Libraries (#GN419.3 .L55).
16. According to Arnold Rubin, “Planning for this exhibition began in 1979, but applications for funding were unsuccessful and the exhibition was abandoned in 1981” (Rubin 1988a, 9). The exhibition then transitioned into a symposium held under the name *Art of the Body*, with a coinciding book published under the title *Marks of Civilization* (Rubin 1988b). Those interested in the planned exhibition and the symposium should consult Box 34 (Folders 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 12; 13; 14; 15; 16; 17; 18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 23; 24; 25), Box 25 (Folders 7; 8; 9; 13; 14; 15; 16;

- 17), Box 52 (Folder 39), Box 53 (Folder 30), and Box 54 (Folder 3) of the Arnold Rubin Papers at UCLA's Fowler Museum of Cultural History.
17. For more on the history of National Tattoo Association, see ([National Tattoo Association 2018](#)).
 18. Curiously, despite their relationship (see note 13, above), Hardy's memoir ([Hardy 2013](#)) does not mention Lemes.
 19. The Arnold Rubin Papers at UCLA's Fowler Museum of Cultural History, however, include correspondence with Lemes and two unpublished book manuscripts (Box 39, Folder 42 and Box 40, Folder 1).
 20. For a high-quality reproduction, see [Bayefsky \(1983, 6\)](#).
 21. This is not to say that there are not more that have yet to be made publicly available. Regardless, by the depicted tattoos alone, one is able to determine that Bayefsky also produced at least two watercolours of Arteau, during 1978 and 1980, respectively. These can be viewed in [Bayefsky \(1983, 78, 14\)](#).
 22. Images of this work can be seen in [Bayefsky \(1983, 5\)](#) and [Varley \(1989, 56\)](#).
 23. Freeman did not work as a tattooist, however.
 24. A *Globe and Mail* article from 1981 noted that Freeman's tattoos included "an eagle perched on a branch surrounded by clouds at his shoulder, an Egyptian sun at his elbow, a griffin on his chest and stomach, a Chinese mandarin and dragon on his back, Pegasus below his right ear, chains at his ankles, parrots on his legs and a star tattooed on the sole of his left foot" ([Freed 1981](#)).
 25. Describing Bayefsky's image of Brenda, Sol [Littman \(1979\)](#) referred to her as "a plump, tough-looking woman, [who] has little sea horses on each of her ample breasts. American Beauty roses adorn her stomach. Peacocks strut on her thighs, humming birds hover on her legs. A bikini of posies covers her pelvis." A watercolour matching this description can be viewed in [Bayefsky \(1983, 9\)](#).
 26. Although I have been unable to locate any works depicting Bear, a reference to one is included in a list of works shown at the fall 1981 Kar Gallery exhibit ([Kar Gallery 1981](#)). Pomerantz and Widerman (1981) includes a photograph of Freeman and Bear taken by photographer Bob Olsen, a print of which is held in the in the Toronto Star Photograph Archive at the Toronto Reference Library, "Tattooing" folder, # tspa_0017672f.
 27. I have not located any Bayefsky works that definitively depict anyone that worked at Beachcomber's Tattoo Studio.
 28. In his formative text on the history of Canadian painting Dennis Reid describes Toronto as "the principal art marketplace in the country" from the mid-1960s through the late 1970s (2012, 367) and the "largest and most dynamic centre for [Canadian] art activity" during the 1980s and 1990s (387).
 29. There is some discrepancy as to the number of works in the show. The Kar Gallery price list indicated there were thirty-nine works ([Kar Gallery 1981](#)), while critic Lisa Balfour [Bowen \(1981\)](#) and her contemporary John Bentley Mays noted that there were forty (1981).
 30. By April 1982 Bayefsky had only received \$6,330 of the promised \$10,000 by the Kar Gallery and thus enlisted the help of Irvin Schein of Goodman and Carr Barristers and Solicitors. Schein drafted a letter to Max Sanders of accounting firm Laventhol and Horwath, which was appointed by Mr. Justice Gray as receiver to "collect, get in and receive the debts due and

outstanding and other assets, property and effects belonging to the Kar Gallery and to receive all books and papers relating to the operation of the company and to receive the proceeds of all accounts in the name of the company or in the name of Helen Karney or Eugene Karniol.” Schein’s letter went on to state that Karniol and Karney were intending to auction the gallery’s assets at the end of that month and that “this letter will be notice to you of our client’s claim, and will advise you that our client will hold Laventhol & Horwath Ltd. responsible in the event that the said auction takes place and the proceeds are dissipated in some fashion in violation of the intent of the Order of Mr. Justice Gray” (Schein 1982). Seeking more information on this chain of events, I contacted Schein, who did not have any recollection of the matter (personal correspondence, 18 January 2018).

31. See Bayefsky (1982) for a list of works included in the show.
32. Translation of this letter was provided by Atsuyo Chau.
33. For more on Norman Keith Collins, see Weiss (2007).
34. Gilbert later published an international survey of tattooing (see Gilbert 2000).
35. For more on Burchett, see Reiter (2012).
36. For a list of all sixty-two people named to the Order of Canada at the same time see (*Globe and Mail* 1979).
37. After returning by September 1958, Bayefsky told Pearl McCarthy that “we have much in common with India, and know too little. I learned as much as I could of its tradition and its modern life and have come back feeling strengthened” (McCarthy 1958). According to an article written by Colin Sabiston, four days after Bayefsky’s works went on sale at the Park Gallery, one-third had been sold (1959). Alongside work from his period as a war artist and paintings from a series on the Paul Bunyan legend, work from Bayefsky’s India trip was later exhibited at a retrospective held during early 1966 at the Albert White Gallery, which one critic referred to as “a chronicle of the Toronto artist’s travels, both geographic and spiritual” (*Globe and Mail* 1966). For more on Bayefsky in India, see Milnes (1959).
38. Right before leaving for Japan in 1969, Bayefsky completed a mural for a new chapel in Temple Sinai on Wilson Avenue in Toronto (Kritzwiser 1969).
39. In attempt to provide greater insight into this situation and the distribution of funding by the Canada Council during the period, on 5 January 2018 I filed an Access to Information and Privacy request with the Canada Council. The information I requested included the names of all applicants and amounts of funding requested from the Canada Council for assistance in the visual arts between the years 1978 and 1986; all requests for funding made by Aba Bayefsky to the Canada Council between the years 1978 and 1986; adjudication criteria used by the Canada Council to evaluate applications for funding between the years 1978 and 1986; and, finally, all completed adjudication forms used to evaluate Aba Bayefsky’s applications for funding from the Canada Council between the years 1978 and 1986. Unfortunately, this request did not yield any information. Three days later, I received a response from Debbie Stenson, Access to Information and Privacy Coordinator at the Canada Council, stating, “Regretfully, no information or documents relevant to the request were found (including situation where relevant records were disposed of under the records retention and disposition policy). The Canada Council retains

successful application files for a period of 20 years, and unsuccessful application files for a period of 3 years” (personal correspondence, 8 January 2018). However, during the 1981–82 year the council awarded \$2,154 to those working in visual arts and photography through its Arts Awards to Individuals program ([Canada Council 1982](#), 8), which travel grants were assessed under.

40. For the 1979–80 year, those that sat on juries for “Short-Term, Project Cost and Travel Grants” in the visual arts category included Eric Cameron, Louis Letocha, and Doris Shadbolt (June 1979); Greg Curnoe, William Laing, Claude Mongrain, Heidi Oberheide, Richard Ste-Marie, and Shirley Wiitsalo (September 1979); Francois Gagnon, John MacGregor, and Liz Major (December 1979); Luc Béland, Henry Saxe, and Nancy Tousley (March 1980; [Canada Council 1980](#), 68–69).
41. Unlike the year prior (see previous note), the 1980–81 annual report does not specify when adjudicators sat on the committee, but those who evaluated “Short-Term, Project Cost and Travel Grants” in the visual arts category for the 1980–81 year included the following: Douglas Bentham, Claude Breeze, Nicole Dubreuil-Blondin, Paterson Ewen, Joe Fafard, Susan Gibson, Dennis Gill, Carl Heywood, Walter Jule, Chris Knudsen, Claude Mongrain, Wayne Morgan, Ann Pollock, Don Proch, Leslie Reid, Denis Rousseau, John Ivor Smith, Gilles Toupin, and Ann Witlock ([Canada Council 1981](#), 45).
42. Textual materials from April 1980 onwards pertaining to Bayefsky’s trip to Japan are largely absent from the Bayefsky fonds at LAC and do not redevelop until 1982.
43. Bayefsky had also been in correspondence with Naito independently of Thurlow ([Naito 1982](#)).
44. [Smart \(2013\)](#) claims that Bayefsky did in fact view the skins, but I have not located any information that confirms this statement.
45. It is unclear exactly when Bayefsky arrived in Japan and for how long he stayed, but an itinerary and expense list—whether real or projected—indicates that he was (or planned to be) in Tokyo beginning on 18 October, followed by Yokohama from 29 October to 15 November. After this, Bayefsky’s location is less clear but the list suggests that his time was (or would be) spent in Tokyo, with a Korean trip somewhere between 15 and 27 November ([Bayefsky 1982b](#)).
46. According to documents obtained through a Freedom of Information request, the initial price of the work was \$5,500, but a checklist for the work’s Accession Documentation File indicates that on the purchase agreement / sales invoice the work was valued at \$4,125. I filed a similar request with the National Gallery of Canada; however, in that instance the price of the work was not provided to me.
47. For more images of Ohwada and others from Yokohama, see Bayefsky (1983).
48. Bayefsky specifically mentioned [Tucker \(1976\)](#). Given the time, it is possible that he also knew of [Tucker \(1981\)](#).
49. Sources give conflicting dates as to the end date of this exhibition. An event invitation ([Gustafsson Galleries 1983](#)) and a *Globe and Mail* article ([Mays 1983](#)) indicate that it lasted until 26 November, while an article in the *Toronto Star* ([Hume 1983](#)) gave 1 December as the end date.
50. I have yet to locate any tattoo works from 1984, although I make no definite assertions as to whether or not they exist. This is problematized by the small number of Bayefsky’s tattoo works in public collections combined with the fact that the main sources for viewing the majority of

work from this series is in reproduced form, namely, *TATTOO/83* (Bayefsky 1983d), which was published pre-1984.

51. These certificates were relatively common and many Westerners, including Toronto's Kenneth "Beachcomber Bill" Cotterell, were part of the Club (see [Tattoo Archive 2014](#), back cover).
52. An image of this work can be viewed in [Varley \(1989, 58\)](#).
53. Three years later, a *Toronto Star* article indicated that he did not want his last name published and referred to him only as "Bill" and "Tatu Manotu" ([Swainson 1988](#)). This *Toronto Star* article also included a photograph taken by photographer Jeff Vinnick that depicted Freeman sitting cross-legged and without a shirt or pants, thus revealing the tattooing on his entire body. A colour print of Vinnick's photo can be found in the Toronto Star Photograph Archive at the Toronto Reference Library, "Tattooing" folder, #tspa_0017679f. Several years later, photographs of Freeman from 1993 were included (under the name "Tattoo Manotu") in photographer Steve Bonge's book *Tattooed with Attitude* (1995). A photograph of Freeman in a shirt and tweed jacket was the book's cover image, and he was also featured inside, albeit topless (cover, 109).

ABBREVIATIONS

LAC: Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

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